WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image processing method of processing an image data using an image file, the image file including the image data and image processing control information to be used for processing the image data, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) determining a degree of auto adjustment for adjusting lightness and contrast of the image data according to lightness of a whole image expressed by the image data, based on the image processing control information; and

(b) performing the auto adjustment based on the determination.

2. The image processing method in accordance with claim 1, wherein,

the image processing control information includes light metering information showing whether a specific metering method is used for photographing of the image data, the specific metering method measuring light only in a specified field of view that is a part of the image; and

the step (a) includes the step of reducing the degree of the auto adjustment when the light metering information shows that the specific metering method is used for the photographing.

3. The image processing method in accordance with claim 2, wherein,

the light metering information represents a selected one among a plurality of metering methods including averaged metering, center-weighted metering, spot metering, multi-spot metering, divisional light metering, and partial light metering, and

the specific metering methods include the spot metering, the multi-spot metering, and the partial metering.

4. The image processing method in accordance with claim 3, wherein,

the step (a) includes the step of providing a user with a user interface to allow the user to select the degree of the auto adjustment when the image processing control information indicates the center-weighted metering.

11. An image processing method of processing an image data using an image file, the image file including the image data and image processing control information to be used for processing the image data, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) selecting one of a plurality of adjustment modes according to the image processing control information; and

(b) automatically adjusting lightness of the image data in the selected adjustment mode according to lightness of a whole image expressed by the image data,

wherein the plurality of adjustment modes include a plurality of adjustment modes having a difference in at least one of a degree of lightness adjustment and a degree of contrast adjustment.

6. The image processing method in accordance with claim 5, wherein,

the image processing control information includes light metering information showing whether a specific metering method is used for photographing of the image data, the specific metering method measuring light only in a specified field of view that is a part of the image, and

the step (a) includes the step of reducing the degree of the auto adjustment when the light metering information shows that the specific metering method is used for photographing.

7. The image processing method in accordance with claim 6, wherein,

the light metering information represents a selected one among a plurality of metering methods including averaged metering, center-weighted metering, spot metering, multi-spot metering, divisional light metering, and partial light metering, and

the specific metering methods include the spot metering, the multi-spot metering, and the partial metering.

8. The image processing method in accordance with claim 7, wherein,

the step (a) includes the step of providing a user with a user interface to allow the user to select the degree of the auto adjustment when the image processing control information indicates the center-weighted metering.

9. An image output method of outputting image data in response to an image file, the image file including the image data and image processing control information to be used for image processing of the image data, the image output method comprising:

the steps included in the image processing method in accordance with any one of claims 1 through 8; and

the step of outputting an image in response to the image-processed image data.

10. A computer-readable medium storing a computer program for causing a computer to process an image data using an image file, the image file including the image data and image processing control information to be used for processing the image data, the computer program comprising programs causing the computer to perform:

a function to determine a degree of an auto adjustment for adjusting lightness and contrast of the image data according to lightness of a whole image expressed by the image data, based on the image processing control information; and

a function to perform the auto adjustment based on the determination.

11. A computer-readable medium storing a computer program for causing a computer to process an image data using an image file, the image file including the image data and image processing control information to be used for processing the image data, the computer program comprising programs causing the computer to perform:

a function to automatically adjust lightness of the image data according to lightness of a whole image expressed by the image data in one of a plurality of adjustment modes; and

a function to select one of the plurality of adjustment modes according to the image processing control information;

wherein the plurality of adjustment modes include a plurality of adjustment modes having a difference in at least one of a degree of lightness adjustment and a degree of contrast adjustment.

12. An image processing apparatus for processing an image data using an image file, the image file including the image data and

image processing control information to be used for processing the image data, the apparatus comprises:

an automatic picture quality adjuster configured to automatically regulate lightness and contrast of the image data according to lightness of a whole image expressed by the image data; and

an adjustment degree determiner configured to determine a degree of the auto adjustment based on the image processing control information.

13. An image processing apparatus for processing an image data using an image file, the image file including the image data and image processing control information to be used for processing the image data, the apparatus comprises:

an automatic picture quality adjuster configured to automatically adjust lightness of the image data according to lightness of a whole image expressed by the image data in one of a plurality of adjustment modes; and

an adjustment mode selector configured to select one of the plurality of adjustment modes according to the image processing control information;

wherein the plurality of adjustment modes include a plurality of adjustment modes having a difference in at least one of a degree of lightness adjustment and a degree of contrast adjustment.